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December 23, 2015

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Cynthia A. Harding, M.P.H.
Interim Director

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cynthia A. Harding". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "H".

SUBJECT: **FOOD FACILITY GRADING SYSTEM
(ITEM NO. 64-A, AGENDA OF JUNE 9, 2015 AND ITEM 59-A, AGENDA
OF SEPTEMBER 1, 2015)**

In a motion by Supervisor Antonovich on June 9, 2015, the Department of Public Health (DPH) was directed to (1) conduct a thorough review of the retail food facility grading system in Los Angeles County, including an assessment of current grading factors, methodology, and a review of grading systems used in other jurisdictions and (2) provide a report of its findings and recommendations to the Board within 30 days. Reports were provided to the Board on July 8, 2015 and on August 18, 2015. In a subsequent motion by Supervisor Antonovich on September 1, 2015, DPH was instructed to provide monthly progress reports to the Board on the restaurant grading recommendation implementation activities. This December 2015 report is the fourth progress report in response to the motion.

The Implementation Plan for Restaurant Grading Recommendations, which was developed to report on the progress or status of each recommendation, was updated for this report (Attachment 1). Some recommendations have already been completed, and the remainder of the recommendations are on track for completion by the established target date.

Under Recommendation A3, DPH sought input from the public to determine what additional information should be included on the grade card. Public input was gathered through an online survey and suggestion boxes. The response period ended on December 3, 2015, with 419 responses gathered. The survey found that over 85% of respondents consider the restaurant grade before going out to eat. Additionally, 93% look for the current grade at the restaurant when they arrive at a restaurant, 34% look at a Yelp! review, and approximately 14% look at the Public Health website. When asked about specific changes to the grade card, 75% answered they would like to see the date the inspection was made, approximately 71% would like to see the violations observed in the current inspection, and 48% would like to see the grade received on the previous inspection. About half of respondents would access this information via QR code if one was made available on the grade card. Further, 71% of respondents would find it helpful for the percentage score to be posted along with the letter grade.

Each Supervisor
December 23, 2015
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These survey results will be shared with industry stakeholders for their input before DPH makes a final decision on the new information that will be added to the grade cards. For reference, Attachment 2 provides the complete survey results.

Meetings were scheduled to take place in December with the Environmental Health Directors of surrounding California counties and cities, but were cancelled as a result of the San Bernardino shootings involving Environmental Health staff. New meeting dates are pending.

The next report will be submitted in January 2016. In the meantime, if you have any questions or need additional information, please let us know.

CAH:dc
PH:1508:006

Attachments

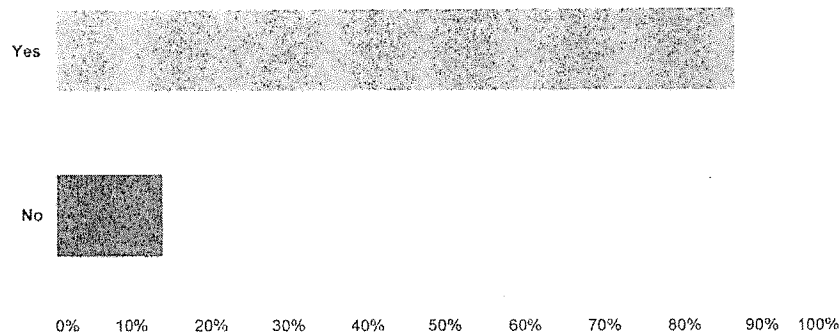
- c: Chief Executive Officer
County Counsel
Acting Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors

Implementation Plan for Restaurant Grading Recommendations - Status Report of 12-23-15

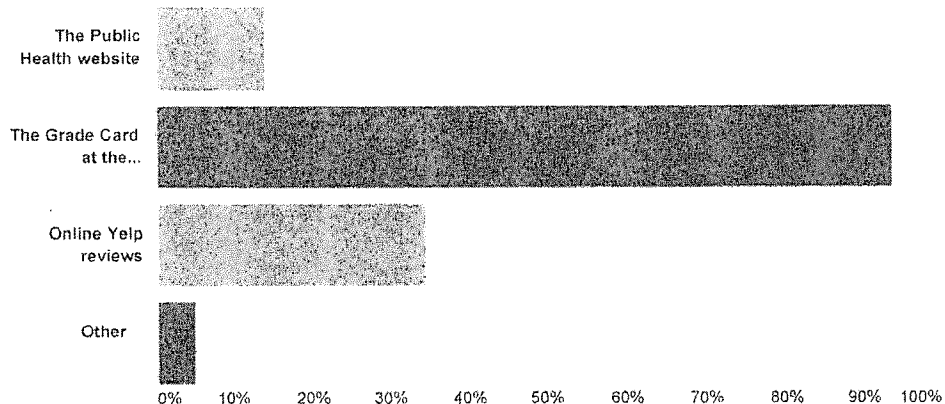
A. AVAILABILITY OF PUBLIC INFORMATION		Target Date	STATUS
RECOMMENDATION A1: Environmental Health (EH) should ensure that all restaurant closures, whether resulting from routine inspections or public complaints, are made publicly available on the EH website.		Completed	As of 10/27/15, all restaurant closures, including those as a result of a complaint, are now posted on the EH website.
RECOMMENDATION A2: EH believes that when a comprehensive foodborne illness investigation is conducted and it is determined that the outbreak is "associated" with the restaurant, this information should be disclosed as well. Additionally, EH will confer with County Counsel, Acute Communicable Disease Control, and Community Health Services to consider appropriate criteria for public disclosure of foodborne illnesses which are potentially associated with a particular restaurant.		4/1/2016	In progress. Meetings scheduled with the Environmental Health Directors of surrounding California counties and cities in December were cancelled due to an emergency. A new meeting date is pending.
RECOMMENDATION A3: EH will seek input from the public to determine what additional information should be included on the grade card. The public will be given the opportunity to provide input through an online survey and suggestion boxes at local district offices.		2/1/2016	In progress. As of the end date of the survey, December 3, 2015, DPH had 419 respondents complete the survey, 414 online and 5 at the local district offices. Survey results will be shared with industry stakeholders before DPH makes a final decision on the changes to the grade card.
B. METHODS OF SCORING AND GRADING		Target Date	STATUS
RECOMMENDATION B1: Because the County of Los Angeles grading system is well-recognized and valued by the public, DPH recommends continuing with the A,B,C grading, but working to improve the rating method on which the grades are based.		Completed	DPH will keep the current A, B, C grading system and will make improvements as referenced under Recommendations A3 and B2.
RECOMMENDATION B2: EH proposes changes to the point value deductions in the inspection report to preclude the issuance of an "A" grade if, upon inspection, the facility is ordered closed or is found to have two major violations.		4/1/2016	In progress. The scheduled December 3, 2015 meeting of Environmental Health Directors subcommittee working on the consistency of inspection reports was cancelled due to an emergency. A new meeting date is pending. The California Restaurant Association (CRA) and the Food Safety Advisory Council (FSAC) ad hoc committee are expected to provide feedback to DPH by December 31, 2015.
C. OPTIMIZE INSPECTIONS THROUGH GREATER USE OF DATA		Target Date	STATUS
RECOMMENDATION C1: EH should conduct trend analyses of EC inspection data to develop informational material on food handling practices and behaviors targeting restaurant operators.		3/1/2016	In progress. The California Restaurant Association (CRA) and the Food Safety Advisory Council (FSAC) ad hoc committee are expected to provide feedback to DPH by December 31, 2015.
D. CHANGES IN POLICY AND PROCEDURE		Target Date	STATUS
RECOMMENDATION D1: EH should revise policy and procedures to strengthen the effective use of permit revocations so that businesses with chronic unsafe practices are precluded from operating without remediating these conditions.		4/1/2016	In progress. The EH internal policy has been revised, but is pending further review in the DPH approval process until industry stakeholders have had an opportunity to comment. The California Restaurant Association (CRA) and the Food Safety Advisory Council (FSAC) ad hoc committee are expected to provide feedback to DPH by December 31, 2015.
RECOMMENDATION D2: EH should assess whether other conditions warrant a minimum time period for closure.		Completed	After internal discussions, it was determined that the existing closure policy is consistent with State law in protecting public health. As such, we do not recommend changing the closure policy.
RECOMMENDATION D3: EH proposes to change its internal policy to allow a graded inspection to occur at any time under specified conditions.		4/1/2016	In progress. A revised EH internal policy has been drafted to change the time requirements in between graded routine inspections, allowing for the facility to receive a complete, graded inspection when a complaint is investigated. The California Restaurant Association (CRA) and the Food Safety Advisory Council (FSAC) ad hoc committee are expected to provide feedback to DPH by December 31, 2015 on these proposed changes.
RECOMMENDATION D4: EH should review the owner initiated inspection (OI) process and determine what modifications should be implemented to prevent restaurant operators who have chronic unsafe food practices from using the process to improve their grade. An analysis of EC inspection data related to OI's will assist in determining the factors EH should target for modification.		3/1/2016	In progress. The scheduled December 3, 2015 meeting of Environmental Health Directors subcommittee working on the consistency of inspection reports was cancelled due to an emergency. A new meeting date is pending. The California Restaurant Association (CRA) and the Food Safety Advisory Council (FSAC) ad hoc committee are expected to provide feedback to DPH by December 31, 2015.

The survey was available to the public from October 1, 2015 through December 3, 2105. The public could access this survey online through a link on the Environmental Health website or a pop-up request, when entering the website. A hard copy version of this survey was also available at 34 district offices, throughout Los Angeles County. Although we received a total of 419 responses to the survey, the respondents were not required to answer all questions and some of the questions had multiple choices, where the respondent could make more than one selection.

1. Do you consider the restaurant grade before going out to eat?



2. Where do you look to find the current grade of a restaurant?

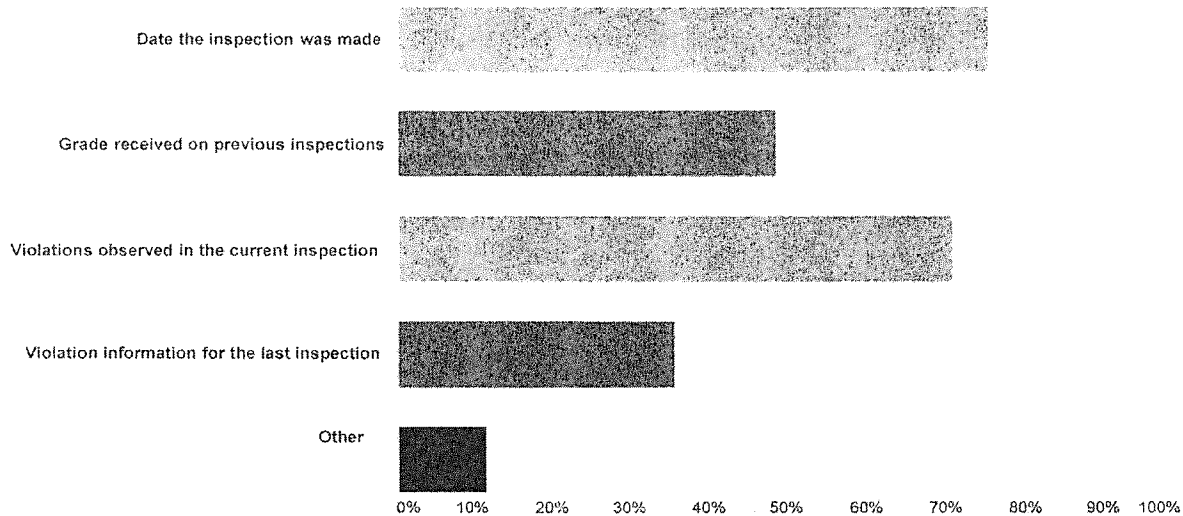


The percentage is greater than 100% due to respondents being able to mark more than one answer.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH GRADE CARD SURVEY

The responses to the first two questions indicates that the grade card posted at the facility is an important piece of information for the public, since 86% of the respondents consider a food business' health inspection grade before eating there and 93% of respondents will look for the grade card posted at the food business. The survey found that 34% of respondents will look at the online reviews on Yelp. In the comments received, several respondents also indicated that they read blogs and reviews from other online sources, such as Zagat. Restaurant closures listed in local papers were also noted as a source of information. Respondents were able to select more than one choice .

3. In addition to the letter grade (A, B, C), which of the following would be important for you to see on the posted grade card?



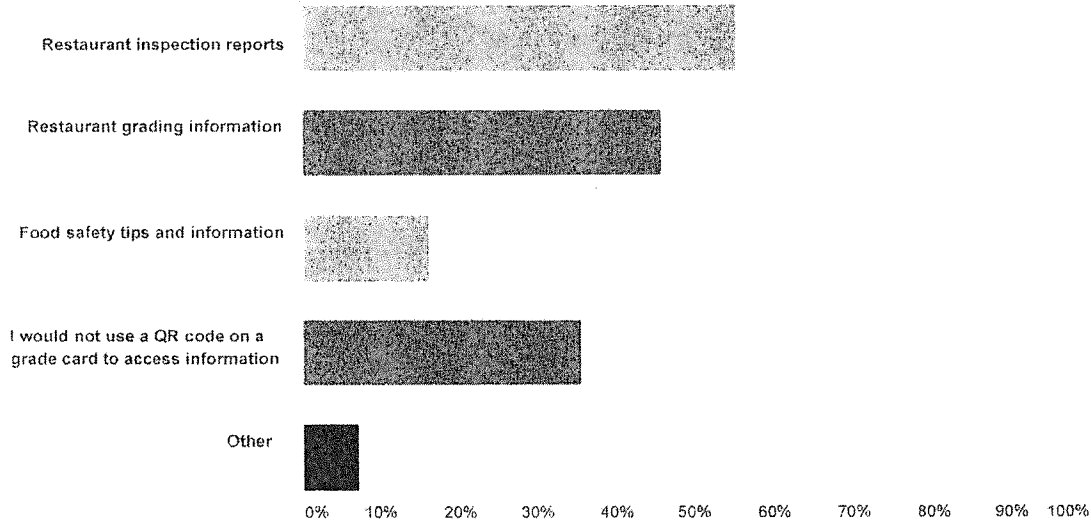
Answer Choices	Responses	
Date the inspection was made	75.12%	311
Grade received on previous inspections	48.31%	200
Violations observed in the current inspection	70.53%	292
Violation information for the last inspection	35.27%	146
Other (please explain)	11.35%	47
Total Respondents: 414		

The date that the inspection was made is an important piece of information to the respondents on the survey, 75% chose this. The survey found that 75% wanted to have information on the violations that were observed when the posted grade was issued. Of lesser importance was grade and violation information from previous inspections.

The percentage is greater than 100% due to respondents being able to mark more than one answer.

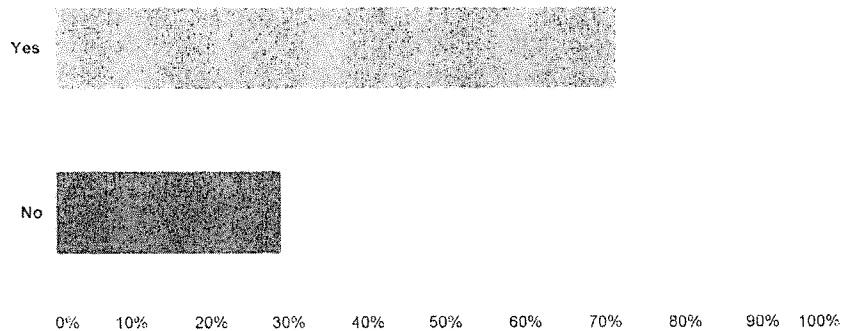
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH GRADE CARD SURVEY

4. Which of the following information would you access with your smartphone if a QR code were made available on the grade card?



Answer Choices	Responses	
Restaurant inspection reports	55.10%	227
Restaurant grading information	45.63%	188
Food safety tips and information	16.02%	66
I would not use a QR code on a grade card to access information	35.44%	146
Other (please explain)	7.04%	29
Total Respondents: 412		

5. Would it be helpful for the percentage score to be posted, along with the letter grade?
For example, "A- 92%; B-85%; C-78%"



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	71.46%	298

The percentage is greater than 100% due to respondents being able to mark more than one answer.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH GRADE CARD SURVEY

No	28.54%	119
Total Respondents: 417		417

The percentage is greater than 100% due to respondents being able to mark more than one answer.